

ENGLISH 250-01: 20TH-CENTURY MODERNIST POETRY
Spring Semester 2015
TH 12:30-1:45 PM, Kennedy Hall 208
CRN: 25318

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Office hours: TH 2:00-3:30 PM, and by appt.

TEXT

Ramazani, Jahan, Richard Ellmann, and Robert O'Clair, eds. *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*. 3rd ed. New York: W.W. Norton, 2003.

The poem of the mind in the act of finding
What will suffice. It has not always had
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what
Was in the script.

Then the theatre was changed
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.

– Wallace Stevens, “Of Modern Poetry” (1942)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will trace the development of modernist poetry through the first half of the twentieth century, beginning with modernist precursors Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, and ending with mid-century poets Kenneth Rexroth and Theodore Roethke. Our readings and discussions will address both the sound and sense of poems. We will look closely at linguistic elements such as diction, syntax, and rhythm, considering the ways modernist poets revived and reshaped poetic conventions. Additionally, we will explore some of the period's key movements and divisions, among them Imagism, high modernism, regionalism, and the Harlem Renaissance.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Papers

You will write three papers for this course: two shorter papers (4-5 pages or 1000-1250 words) and a longer final paper (10-12 pages or 2500-3000 words). The first two papers will present close readings of poems based only on your own interpretations (i.e. no secondary sources). The final paper will explore a theme or trend in the work of one poet, and it must incorporate at least two but no more than five secondary sources. We will talk more in class about strategies for locating and evaluating these materials.

Group Work

Three times during the semester (2/12, 3/17, and 4/9) you will be asked to complete a group assignment related to the day's reading. More information about these assignments will be posted to Moodle in the coming weeks.

Final Exam

There will be a final exam at the end of the semester. Designed to test your knowledge and comprehension of the assigned readings, it will consist of a matching section, identifications, and two short essays.

Participation

Participation is an important component of this course. You may notice that you have fewer pages to read than you might in other literature or humanities courses (particularly those that focus on prose). Be aware, though, that much of your reading will be dense. In order to make significant contributions in class, **you will need to read the poems at least twice**, paying close attention to both form and content—what a poem is saying and how it's saying it.

I may give quizzes. We will not be able to discuss all of the assigned poems in class, and quizzes will help me keep track of your progress. These will be short (3-4 questions), and if you have done the reading you should not have trouble passing them.

If you 1) fail a quiz or 2) come to class without your book or other required materials, you will be marked as absent for the day.

Finally, please note that the fiction writer Kevin Wilson will read from his work on Tuesday, January 27 at 7:00 PM in Tuthill Auditorium, Hassell Hall. Your attendance at this event is strongly encouraged and will earn you extra credit on your final exam.

Dates for Papers and Exams

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|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Tuesday, February 3 | Paper 1A due* |
| Tuesday, February 17 | Paper 1B due* |
| Tuesday, March 24 | Paper 2A due* |
| Tuesday, April 14 | Paper 2B due* |
| Thursday, April 28 | Submit topic/abstract for Final Paper |
| Wednesday, May 6 | Final Paper due |
| Friday, May 8 | Final Exam (01) |

*There are two possible due dates for each of the first two papers.

POLICIES

Attendance

You are allowed three absences, excused or otherwise. For each absence after the third, your final grade will be deducted by one point. Keep in mind that, as noted above, failing a quiz or coming to class without the required materials will result in being marked as absent. If you miss more than six classes, you will fail the course.

Paper Requirements

All papers should be typed, **stapled**, and formatted according to MLA style. A handout on paper format, including several tips for quoting and citing poetry, is available on Moodle. You also are encouraged to visit the Writing Center (www.rhodes.edu/writingcenter/default.asp, Barrett Library 122).

I will collect your papers at the beginning of class on the scheduled due date. I will not accept work sent through email. Late assignments will be deducted by 1/3 of a letter grade per day (i.e. B+ to B) for up to one week. Assignments received more than a week late will receive an F.

Grading

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| First Paper | 20% |
| Second Paper | 20% |
| Final Exam | 20% |
| Final Paper | 30% |
| Participation (includes group work and quizzes) | 10% |

Academic Honesty

All work in this course should be original and individual, unless I have made a group assignment. Evidence of collusion (someone helped you write the assignment), plagiarism (using someone else's published or unpublished words without acknowledgement), or multiple submissions (handing in the same work to different classes) will not be tolerated. All students are expected to honor their commitment to the Honor Code.

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| ENGLISH 250: SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS |
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Readings and assignments are listed on the day they are due. Unless otherwise noted, all poems and essays referenced are from *The Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry*, Vol. 1. Prose selections appear at the end of the anthology (pp. 865-1010). Any materials posted to Moodle **must** be printed out and brought to class (no reading from laptops, tablets, or phones).

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| Thursday, 1/15 | Introductions / syllabus review |
| Tuesday, 1/20 | Walt Whitman, through “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” and From Preface to <i>Leaves of Grass</i> |
| Thursday, 1/22 | Emily Dickinson, all poems and Letters 261, 265, and 268 |
| Tuesday, 1/27 | Robert Frost through “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” → <u>Reminder: Novelist Kevin Wilson reads from his work this evening at 7:00 PM in Tuthill Auditorium, Hassell Hall</u> |
| Thursday, 1/29 | Robert Frost, “For Once, Then, Something” through end of section and “The Figure a Poem Makes” |
| Tuesday, 2/3 | Gertrude Stein, all poems “Composition as Explanation” (Moodle) → <u>Paper 1A due</u> |
| Thursday, 2/5 | Mina Loy, all poems, and “Feminist Manifesto” Excerpts from <i>BLAST</i> : “Long Live the Vortex!,” “Manifesto—,”; and “Manifesto—2” |
| Tuesday, 2/10 | H.D., all poems Amy Lowell, Ed., Preface to <i>Some Imagiste Poets</i> |
| Thursday, 2/12 | Wilfred Owen, all poems and Preface (prose) → <u>Group work</u> |
| Tuesday, 2/17 | Ezra Pound, through “Lament of the Frontier Guard” and “A Retrospect” → <u>Paper 1B due</u> |
| Thursday, 2/19 | T.S. Eliot, through “Gerontion” and “Tradition and the Individual Talent” |
| Tuesday, 2/24 | T.S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> |
| Thursday, 2/26 | T.S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> |
| Tuesday, 3/3 | Wallace Stevens, through “The Idea of Order at Key West” |
| Thursday, 3/5 | Wallace Stevens, “A Postcard from the Volcano” through “Of Modern Poetry” and From “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words” |
| Tuesday, 3/10 | Spring Break – NO CLASS |
| Thursday, 3/12 | Spring Break – NO CLASS |

- Tuesday, 3/17** TBA
→ Group work
- Thursday, 3/19** William Carlos Williams, through “Flowers by the Sea” and From Prologue to *Kora in Hell*
- Tuesday, 3/24** Williams, “The Botticellian Trees” through “Pictures from Bruegel” Introduction to *The Wedge* (Moodle)
→ Paper 2A due
- Thursday, 3/26** Marianne Moore, through “The Paper Nautilus” and “Humility, Concentration, and Gusto”
- Tuesday, 3/31** Marianne Moore, through “The Paper Nautilus” and “Humility, Concentration, and Gusto”
- Thursday, 4/2** D.H. Lawrence, all poems and “Poetry of the Present”
Easter Recess – NO CLASS
- Tuesday, 4/7** D.H. Lawrence, all poems and “Poetry of the Present”
- Thursday, 4/9** Langston Hughes, through “The Bitter River” and “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain”
Sterling Brown, all poems
→ Group work
- Tuesday, 4/14** Claude McKay, all poems
Jean Toomer, all poems
Countee Cullen, all poems
→ Paper 2B due
- Thursday, 4/16** Langston Hughes, “Montage of a Dream Deferred”
- Tuesday, 4/21** W.H. Auden, through “In Praise of Limestone” and “Writing”
- Thursday, 4/23** W.H. Auden, through “In Praise of Limestone” and “Writing”
- Tuesday, 4/28** Theodore Roethke, all poems
→ Submit topic and abstract for Final Paper
- Thursday, 4/30** Review for Final Exam

→ Final papers due in my office by noon on Wednesday, 5/6.

→ Final exam is at 1 PM on Friday, 5/8. Location TBA.